# Supporting Students' Reflective Capabilities Through Self-Reflective Shapes

## Introduction and background

**There is an increasing call for individuals to self-reflect. However, there is a lack of research-based materials which can help them to do so effectively. In this article, Simon Brownhill from the University of Bristol School of Education offers a literature-based exploration of this critical skill. He explores what self-reflection is, why it is important, and how it can be practically undertaken.**

## Key points

**What is self-reflection?**

- According to theorists like Mead and Vygotsky, self-reflection is 'a defining feature of humans, and fundamental to the higher mental functions' (Gillespie, 2007, p. 678).
- Several definitions of self-reflection exist in the literature. Lew and Schmidt (2011, p. 520) suggest that definitions of self-reflection vary depending on whether the focus is on practice or theory; these include 'philosophical articulations as in Dewey (1991), formulations in theoretical frameworks, such as the "reflection-*in*-action" and "reflection-*on*-action" constructs developed by Schön (1983), to the use of reflection in the experiential learning cycle by Kolb (1984)'.
- Neale (2019) describes self-reflection as 'taking time to think, contemplate, examine, and review yourself as part of increasing your self-awareness'. This resonates with the thinking of Shaw et al. (2018, p. 2) who see self-reflection (in the context of students) as 'reflect[ing] upon their own learning, which includes their personal experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and claims'.
- Gläser-Zikuda (2012) describes self-reflection as 'a conscious mental process relying on thinking, reasoning, and examining one's own thoughts, feelings, and ideas.'
- Donovan et al. (2015) claim that self-reflection has often been understood as a *trait*. Indeed, 'the *evaluation* [added emphasis] of one's own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours can be regarded as an individual difference variable – if self-monitoring can be seen as an indicator for self-reflection' (p. 285). Self-reflection can, however, also be understood as a *state* – 'people may engage in self-reflection depending on the importance and relevance of a task' (p. 285).
- Other definitions see self-reflection as a process. Yip (2006, p. 777) describes it as 'a process of self-analysis, self-evaluation, self-dialogue, and self-observation'.
- The literature suggests that there are three types of self-reflection. Grant et al. (2002) suggest that one type of self-reflection embraces a *problem* or *solution-focused approach* where people constructively reflect on how best to reach their goals. Another type entails a *self-focussed* approach, whereby an individual questions their own assumptions, presuppositions, and meaning perspectives (Meirzow, 2006). Critical self-

reflection, as defined by Stein (2000), involves not only having an understanding of the assumptions which govern one's actions, but also questioning their meaning and developing alternative ways of acting.

- Assumptions that self-reflection is a solo venture are challenged by Sutherland (2013, p. 113) who recognises the power of *collaborative* self-reflection in helping 'to better understand the needs of [others]'.
- Johnson (2020) draws a distinction between *structured* and *unstructured* self-reflection. The former is based on specific questions, whereas the latter involves 'letting thoughts flow without restriction, permitting ideas, insights, and connections to randomly surface' (p. 26).

**The importance of self-reflection**

- Many researchers have highlighted the value of self-reflection across a wide range of contexts/countries.
- McCoy (2013, p. 151) acknowledges the value of self-reflection in middle schools in the United States of America (USA), suggesting that '[s]elf-reflection provides opportunity for students to think about their own thinking and their own progress … allow[ing] students to honestly evaluate their own engagement with learning'. As such, this enhances students' self-awareness and helps them to associate their learning efforts with the evaluation and grades they ultimately receive for their work.
- Toros and Medar (2015, p. 89) focus on Estonian social work undergraduates, recognising that '[s]elf-reflection is significant to students' training as it enhances their personal and professional development in practice … increasing professional growth and competence [which] in turn increases the quality of social work.'
- Bubnys (2019, p. 1) found similar benefits in relation to Lithuanian special education degree students: 'The results disclosed that self-reflection provides students with [a] deeper perception of themselves as people with special educators' needs and problems, personal strengths and competence limitations that enable them to identify sources and means for solving existing and future professional activity problems.'
- The value of self-reflection for educators is cited by several researchers (Klimova 2014; Surgenor, 2011). Brookfield (1995, cited in Miller, 2010, p.1) asserts that

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'[s]elf-reflection is the foundation for reflective teaching'.

- Researchers have also demonstrated links between self-reflection and performance. Schippers et al. (2013) found that customer service workers in the Netherlands performed significantly better on a set task when they had either practiced self-reflection or reflected and sharing their experiences with others.
- The link between enhanced performance and self-reflection is noted in the work of Hullinger et al. (2019, p. 9) who suggest that '[t]he literature on nursing, education, and public health indicates that self-reflection brings about deeper understanding of self-concept, enrichment of learning outcomes, and enhancement of critical thinking skills'. The notion of self-reflection *enriching* the learning process is a strongly held view in the literature (see Helyer, 2015) and one which the author of this summary strongly supports.

**How can self-reflection be undertaken?**

- A variety of different techniques and strategies for self-reflection are proposed in the literature.
- Within the context of English Language Proficiency education at the university level, Chuprina and Zaher (2011, p. 59) advocate a suite of techniques that are 'available for teachers to invite students to participate in self-reflection and self-evaluation'. These include assessments and diagnostics which allow students to reflect on where they are: worksheets with questions to promote depth of self-reflection; in-class and online journaling; and online discussion forums in which students can reflect on their skills at the beginning and end of each term.
- The most commonly advocated technique is the use of reflective questions and prompts (Fook et al., 2000) for the self-reflector to ask themselves and answer. Osmond and Darlington (2005) suggest that these questions fall into different categories, e.g. *case analysis questions* (questions that help an individual to self-reflect on an incident they were involved in), *exploring differences and presenting contingencies* (questions that provide alternative eventualities), and *before-and-after questions/sentence starters*.
- Assertions that these questions and prompts are likely to only yield internalised responses from the self-reflector are challenged by Epler et al. (2013) who advocate the use of 'think-alouds' which involve individuals verbalising their self-reflective thoughts and considerations while solving a problem.
- Spoken self-reflection allows self-reflectors to articulate their thoughts to facilitate deeper self-awareness, and to allow others to be privy to their thinking and understanding. Other oral self-reflection techniques include the recording of voiced thoughts as part of a digital diary (video or podcast), engaging in one-to-one discussions (face-to-face or online), along with giving verbal presentations and partaking in a spoken dialogue with critical friends (see Malisuwan et al., 2015).
- Self-reflection can be facilitated through written activity, e.g., engaging with jotters, completing forms, and templates, and producing essays, reports, papers/ articles, and blogs. Lindroth (2015, p. 66) suggests that the use of journals has been identified as an 'effective tool' to promote self-reflection, particularly

in pre-service teachers; indeed, Hatcher and Bringle (1996) recognise a variety of journals that self-reflectors can engage with; these include *personal, dialogue, highlighted, key phrase, double-entry, critical incident*, and *three-part* journals (see pp. 4-5).

- Creative approaches to self-reflection, including pictorial representation, mapping, game play, and visualisations (Govaerts et al., 2010) add to the plethora of techniques that are available to aid self-reflection. *It is very important for self-reflectors to use and adapt techniques of their choosing that are both meaningful and work for them*. This principle underpins the 'Self-Reflective Shapes' approach devised by the author, which is described below.

**The 'Self-Reflective Shapes' approach**

- To follow this approach, individuals are first invited to sketch out any 2-dimensional shape of their choosing – this can either be hand drawn on a piece of paper or created digitally using an electronic device. Free choice is given in relation to the shape's form (be it regular or irregular in construct), its size and its meaning to the individual (it being of personal significance or random in selection).
- Once drawn, individuals are then to split the shape up into separate parts using a self-selected number of lines that emulate qualities of their choosing, e.g., dashed, straight, or zig-zag. Individuals are then required to ask themselves some self-reflective questions, these being sought from one or more sources, examples of which include reflective cycles (e.g., Johns, 1995), published articles (e.g., Malthouse et al., 2015), online lists (e.g., Dubec, 2017) or self-generated. These questions help individuals to self-reflect on their learning in relation to 'a professional experience, an event/critical incident, a conversation, an observation, a review of their progress, or personal practice' (Kirkman and Brownhill, 2020, p. 103).
- Responses to the questions are committed to various parts of the Self-Reflective Shape. They are recorded in any way that the individual chooses, e.g., free writing, numbers, images, drawings or key words.
- *NOTE: The full article contains two examples of Self-Reflective Shapes from different contexts.*

**Benefits of the 'Self-Reflective Shapes' approach**

- The approach can help reduce the 'initial fear' of the empty paper or screen – 'Self-Reflective Shapes' aid the self-reflector by focusing their attention on a designated area of the blank page/screen through the use of a simple shape that is familiar and 'safe' to them (Bennett-Levy and Lee, 2014).
- The approach can be used to facilitate different types of reflection that self-reflectors may wish to utilise – 'Self-Reflective Shapes' can be used *in*-action (e.g., *as* a class discussion is taking place), *on*-action (e.g., *after* a unit of work has been taught) (Schön, 1983) and *for*-action (e.g., *before* a lesson or session takes place) (Killion and Todnem, 1991).
- The approach is 'time adaptive' – self-reflectors can engage with their Self-Reflective Shape for as little or as long as they want to (Johnson, 2020); this is dependent on the number of separate parts that make up their Shape and the number/complexity of the self-reflective questions being responded to.
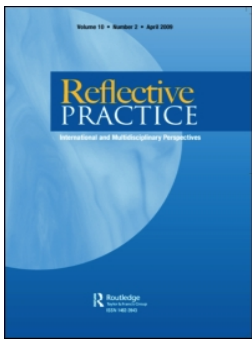
# Asking key questions of self-reflection

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# Asking key questions of self-reflection

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**ABSTRACT**

The call for individuals to engage in reflection is increasingly prevalent across much of the world. To aid this, a wealth of practical paper-based manuals, online tutorials and face-to-face training is available to foster participant engagement. However, a noticeable gap in this support is evident when learners and professionals in the workforce are asked to 'self-reflect'. This thoughtpiece seeks to positively address this by offering a literature-based exploration of this critical skill; this is facilitated by asking and answering key questions such as what is self-reflection, why is it important, and how can it be practically undertaken. Efforts to encourage individuals to engage in creative self-reflective activity are fuelled by an explanation of the *Self-Reflective Shapes* approach that has been developed by the author. Written to be accessible in both content and scope, the discussion offered serves as an introductory 'go-to' that has the potential to help individuals self-reflect as part of their learning and/or professional development with improved clarity, appreciation and confidence.

## Introduction

Hilden and Tikkamäki (2013, p. 77) assert that '[t]here is a broad consensus among learning theorists that reflection is at the core of ... learning and professional growth, transformation and empowerment'. Given its importance, support for individuals to effectively engage in reflection is plentiful: models of reflection (Chiplin & Stavric, 2017), published guides (Bassot, 2016), toolkits (The University of Edinburgh, 2020) and online videos (Mertler, 2019) serve as examples of the diverse range of resources available. Surprisingly, when individuals set out to engage in self-reflection, levels of support are limited; this is despite the fact that Belobrovy (2018, p. 204) argues that '[s]elf-reflection and its contribution to the field of general learner development has gathered abundant attention in research literature over recent years'. This thoughtpiece was born out of my personal frustration when attempting to actively engage in self-reflection as part of my continuing professional development. Few sources of information that solely focussed on this critical skill were deemed sufficiently research-informed or practically orientated to aid me when I worked as a classroom teacher and as a trainer; this resulted in hours of library and online searches for journal articles, conference papers, practice-based reports and quality websites to inform, support and guide me.[1] In light of the above, I aim to unite

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the fragmented information I collated about self-reflection, presenting this in the form an introductory 'go-to' for individuals to access and learn from. To structure the discussion, a select number of key questions are asked and answered, the first of which seeks to establish what 'self-reflection' actually is.

## What is 'self-reflection'?

'According to theorists like Mead and Vygotsky, self-reflection is a defining feature of humans, and fundamental to the higher mental functions' (Gillespie, 2007, p. 678). Given its suggested importance, a number of definitions exist in the literature. Sometimes referred to as 'personal reflection' or 'self-assessment', Lew and Schmidt (2011, p. 520) suggest that definitions of self-reflection vary depending on whether the focus is on practice or theory; these include 'philosophical articulations as in Dewey (1991), formulations in theoretical frameworks, such as the "reflection-*in*-action" and "reflection-*on*-action" constructs developed by Schön (1983), to the use of reflection in the experiential learning cycle by Kolb (1984)'.

In simple terms, Neale (2019) describes self-reflection as 'taking time to think, contemplate, examine and review yourself as part of increasing your self-awareness'. This resonates with the thinking of Shaw et al. (2018, p. 2) who see self-reflection (in the context of students) as 'reflect[ing] upon their own learning, which includes their personal experiences, perspectives, beliefs and claims'. Synergies here are noted in the description of self-reflection proposed by Jonassen et al. (2008, p. 3):

> by reflecting on [a] puzzling experience, learners integrate their new experiences with their prior knowledge about the world, or they establish goals for what they need to learn in order to make sense out of what they observe.

Jonassen et al.'s idea of self ('their') is clearly evident in the thinking of Gläser-Zikuda (2012) who defines self-reflection as 'self-observation and report[ing] of one's thoughts, desires and feelings.' She builds on this, suggesting self-reflection to be 'a conscious mental process relying on thinking, reasoning, and examining one's own thoughts, feelings and ideas.' Donovan et al. (2015) claim that self-reflection has often been understood as a *trait*. Indeed, 'the *evaluation* [added emphasis] of one's own thoughts, feelings, and behavio[u]rs can be regarded as an individual difference variable – if self-monitoring can be seen as an indicator for self-reflection' (p. 285). Self-reflection can, however, also be understood as a *state* – '[p]eople may engage in self-reflection depending on the importance and relevance of a task' (p. 285). Commonly though, prominent definitions of the concept understand self-reflection to be a *process* (see Davies et al., 2013); indeed, Yip (2006, p. 777) argues that self-reflection is 'a process of self-analysis, self-evaluation, self-dialogue and self-observation'. Jaspers (1963) supports this assertion in part, acknowledging self-observation to be one of three important *elements* of self-reflection, the other two being self-understanding and self-revelation (see Yip, 2007, pp. 290–292).

Just as there are different types of reflection (Finlay, 2008), so too are there different *types* of self-reflection. Grant et al. (2002) suggest that one type of self-reflection embraces a *problem* or *solution-focused approach* where people constructively reflect on how best to reach their goals, whereas another type utilises a *self-focused approach* where individuals attempt to understand, contain or dissipate their negative emotional, cognitive and

behavioural reactions. This latter approach connects to the idea of *critical* self-reflection which refers to the process of questioning one's own assumptions, presuppositions, and meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 2006). Whilst reactions to the word 'critical' are likely to evoke a focus on the negative aspects of an interaction or experience (White et al., 2006), critical self-reflection positively involves individuals having not only an understanding of the assumptions that govern their actions, but questioning their meaning and developing alternative ways of acting (Stein, 2000). Questions are very much connected with self-reflection given that '[p]racticing self-reflection means systematically communicating with the self by taking time to ask questions of the self and thinking through issues' (Hullinger et al., 2019, p. 10). This is of particular value when individuals seek to practically engage in self-reflective activity, a point for comment later on in this discussion.

Assertions that self-refection is a 'solo venture' [my words] are challenged by the thinking of Sutherland (2013, p. 113) who recognises the power of *collaborative* self-reflection in helping 'to better understand the needs of [others]'. *Structured* and *unstructured* self-reflection also exist, these either being 'organised around one or more questions, either evaluative or exploratory' [structured] or 'letting thoughts flow without restriction, permitting ideas, insights and connections to randomly surface' [unstructured] (Johnson, 2020, p. 26). One important insight which needs to be explored relates to the perceived importance of self-reflection, a focus to which this discussion now turns.

## Why is self-reflection so important?

Ardelt and Grunwald (2018, p. 188) recognise the importance of self-reflection by arguing that it 'foster[s] human development and personal transformation and, ultimately, a better society'. To validate this claim, the development and transformation of select groups of individuals across different disciplines and in different contexts are considered below.

McCoy (2013, p. 151) acknowledges the value of self-reflection in middle schools in the United States of America (USA), suggesting that '[s]elf-reflection provides opportunity for students to think about their own thinking and their own progress . . . allow[ing] students to honestly evaluate their own engagement with learning'. As such, this enhances students' self-awareness and helps them to associate their learning efforts with the evaluation and grades they ultimately receive for their work. Toros and Medar (2015, p. 89) focus their attention on Estonian social work undergraduates, recognising that '[s]elf-reflection is significant to students' training as it enhances their personal and professional development in practice . . . increas[ing] professional growth and competence, [which] in turn increases the quality of social work.' These assertions validate the research findings of Bubnys (2019, p. 1) in relation to the numerous benefits of self-reflection noted for Lithuanian special education degree students: 'The results disclosed that self-reflection provides students with [a] deeper perception of themselves as people with special educators' needs and problems, personal strengths and competence limitations that enable them to identify sources and means for solving existing and future professional activity problems.'

Klimova (2014, p. 119) builds on the above, arguing that self-reflection is not just of benefit to students but also to educators in the Czech Republic by acknowledging it as 'a valuable source for teachers . . . since they can see whether their teaching was successful

or not and on the basis of students' reflection they can reconsider their teaching methods, strategies or activities.' Surgenor (2011, p. 5) considers this claim in the context of Irish teachers, suggesting that they move 'to a more explicit, intentional approach' when they are engaged in self-reflection as this 'enables the teacher to learn from and potentially enhance their practice (and their awareness of the reflection process) … which can be applied to any aspect of teaching'. The importance of self-reflection for *all* educators, irrespective of their location or discipline, is clearly emphasised by Brookfield (1995, cited in Miller, 2010, p.1) who asserts that '[s]elf-reflection is the foundation for reflective teaching' (as cited in Miller, 2010, p. 1).

Research by Schippers et al. (2013) stresses the importance of self-reflection in the context of customer service workers in the Netherlands who performed significantly better on a set task by either practicing self-reflection or reflecting and sharing their experiences with others as opposed to those who merely practiced: 'Those who self-reflected were also much more likely to be in the top-rated group for customer satisfaction across all participants' (BetterUp, n.d., p. 5). The link between enhanced performance and self-reflection is noted in the work of Hullinger et al. (2019, p. 9) who suggest that '[t]he literature on nursing, education, and public health indicates that self-reflection brings about deeper understanding of self-concept, enrichment of learning outcomes, and enhancement of critical thinking skills'. The notion of self-reflection *enriching* the learning process is a strongly held view in the literature (see Helyer, 2015) and one which I support.

Whilst the significance of self-reflection should be recognised, more important is the need for individuals to ask how self-reflection can be practically undertaken.

## How can self-reflection be undertaken?

Stimulating self-reflection requires the use of different strategies and ideas. Indeed, Chuprina and Zaher (2011, p. 59) advocate a suite of techniques that are 'available for teachers to invite students to participate in self-reflection and self-evaluation'; these are summarised in Table 1 below in the context of English Language Proficiency education at the university level.

**Table 1.** Techniques to engage students in self-reflection (adapted from Chuprina & Zaher, 2011, pp. 57–60).

| | |
|---|---|
| Online discussion forums in which students are asked to self-reflect on their own skills at the beginning and end of the study term. | Worksheets with questions to promote depth of self-reflection. |
| Initial assessments and diagnostics that are administered by the instructor that get students to self-reflect on their abilities. | In-class and on-line journaling with questions that help students to self-reflect on their learning goals, learning needs and the learning process. |
| Self-reflective writing that promotes connectivity between the mind and emotions. | Course learning outcomes in the syllabi underlining the importance of learning and study skills, e.g. self-reflection. |
| Assignment rubrics that provide students with information on the requirements of each component that students can self-reflect on. | Classroom Assessments Technique forms that contain specific questions that lead students through the self-inquiry process in certain subjects. |
| Mid-term and end-of-course student evaluations, which allow instructors to gather information regarding whether each student is learning and allow students to self-reflect on their instruction based on their feedback. | |

The most commonly advocated technique is the use of reflective questions and prompts (Fook et al., 2000) for the self-reflector [the individual self-reflecting] to ask themselves and answer. Osmond and Darlington (2005) support this, suggesting that these questions fall into different categories, e.g. case analysis questions (questions that help an individual to self-reflect on an incident they were involved in), exploring differences and presenting contingencies (questions that provide alternative eventualities), and before-and-after questions/sentence starters. Assertions that these questions and prompts are likely to only yield internalised responses from the self-reflector are challenged by Epler et al. (2013) who advocate the use of 'think-alouds' which involve individuals verbalising their self-reflective thoughts and considerations while solving a problem. Spoken self-reflection [my term] allows self-reflectors to articulate their self-reflective thoughts to facilitate deeper self-awareness and to allow others to be privy to their thinking and understanding. Other oral self-reflection techniques exist; these include the recording of voiced thoughts as part of a digital diary (video or podcast), engaging in one-to-one discussions (face-to-face or online), along with giving verbal presentations and partaking in a spoken dialogue with critical friends (see Malisuwan et al., 2015).

Self-reflection is, however, not limited to just one's own internalised thinking or oral responses; self-reflection can be facilitated through written activity, e.g. engaging with jotters, completing forms and templates, and producing essays, reports, papers/articles and blogs. Lindroth, 2015, p. 66) suggests that the use of journals has been identified as an 'effective tool' to promote self-reflection, particularly in pre-service teachers; indeed, Hatcher and Bringle (1996) recognise a variety of journals that self-reflectors can engage with; these include *personal, dialogue, highlighted, key phrase, double-entry, critical incident*, and *three-part* journals (see pp. 4–5). Creative approaches to self-reflection, including pictorial representation, mapping, game play and visualisations (Govaerts et al., 2010) add to the plethora of techniques that are available to aid self-reflection. Of importance is the idea that self-reflectors are able to use and adapt techniques of their choosing that are both meaningful and work for them; this is due to the fact that it is *they* who are the ones who have to put these selected techniques into action for their self-reflection. This serves as an underpinning principle for the innovative *Self-Reflective Shapes* approach that I have devised (Kirkman & Brownhill, 2020), a brief explanation of which is offered below.

## What is the *Self-Reflective Shapes* approach?

A detailed description of the *Self-Reflective Shapes* approach is offered by Kirkman and Brownhill (2020, pp. 102-106). Initially, individuals are invited to sketch out any 2-dimensional shape of their choosing – this can either be hand drawn on a piece of paper or created digitally using an electronic device. Free choice is given in relation to the shape's form (be it regular or irregular in construct), its size and its meaning to the individual (it being of personal significance or random in selection). Once drawn, individuals are to then split the shape up into separate parts using a self-selected number of lines that emulate qualities of their choosing, e.g. dashed, straight or zig-zag. Individuals are then required to ask themselves some self-reflective questions, these being sought from one or more sources, examples of which include reflective cycles (e.g. Johns, 1995), published articles (e.g. Malthouse et al., 2015), online lists (e.g. Dubec, 2017) or self-generated. These questions are to be used to help individuals self-reflect on their learning in relation to 'a

professional experience, an event/critical incident, a conversation, an observation, a review of their progress, or a personal practice' (Kirkman & Brownhill, 2020, p.103). The responses that individuals make to these questions are to be committed to different parts offered in their Self-Reflective Shape, their self-reflective thoughts being recorded in any way *that the individual chooses*, e.g. free writing, numbers, images, drawings or key words (these having meaning for the individual). To illustrate the above, Figure 1 offers an example of a Self-Reflective Shape that was personally devised for reader review and reflection whereas Figure 2 offers an image of a Self-Reflective Shape that was completed by a teacher trainer following a period of coaching/mentoring in an educational setting in Kazakhstan.

There are numerous advantages to embracing this novel approach to self-reflection, several of which are offered in bullet point form below:

- The approach can help reduce the 'initial fear' of the empty paper or screen – *Self-Reflective Shapes* aid the self-reflector by focusing their attention on a designated area of the blank page/screen through the use of a simple shape that is familiar and 'safe' to them (Bennett-Levy & Lee, 2014).
- The approach can be used to facilitate different types of reflection that self-reflectors may wish to utilise – *Self-Reflective Shapes* can be used *in-action* (e.g. as a class discussion is taking place), *on-action* (e.g. after a unit of work has been taught) (Schön, 1983) and *for-action* (e.g. before a lesson or session takes place) (Killion & Todnem, 1991).
- The approach is 'time adaptive' – self-reflectors can engage with their Self-Reflective Shape for as little or as long as they want to/are able to set aside time to think (Johnson, 2020); this is dependent on the number of separate parts that make up their Shape and the number/complexity of the self-reflective questions being responded to.
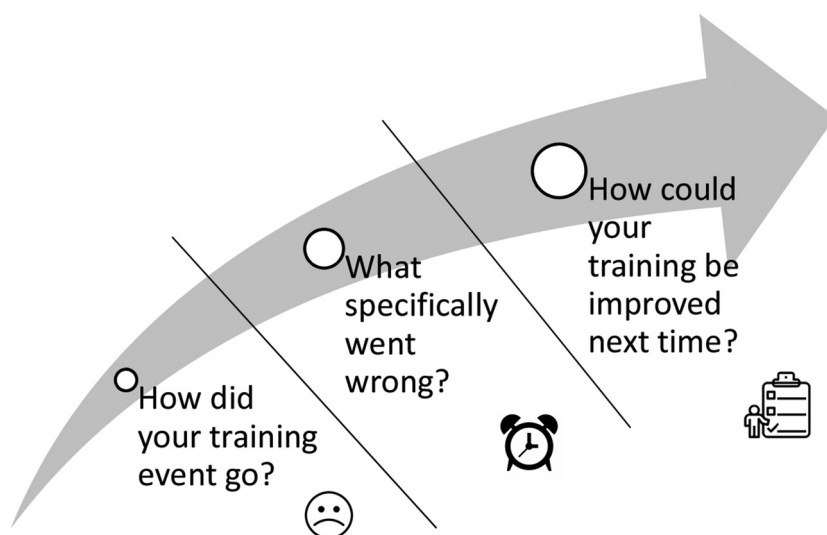


**Figure 1.** A Self-Reflective Shape created by the author using self-reflective questions and emoji/icon responses.
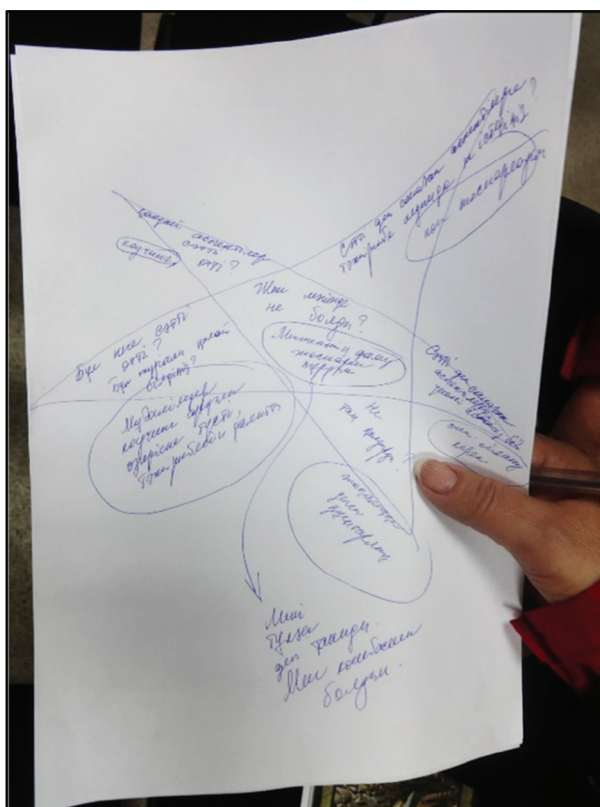
**Figure 2.** A Self-Reflective Shape completed by a teacher trainer following a period of coaching/mentoring in an educational setting in Kazakhstan (photograph taken by the author).

At present, there is no empirical evidence to determine the value of this as an approach to self-reflection; this can only be determined by those who willingly use it and critically reflect on its worth in supporting their self-reflection.

## Conclusion

As a 21st Century Skill,[2] self-reflection is deemed to be a new competency 'which society is increasingly demanding of the existing workforce and, in educational terms, of the youth who need to be trained today for future jobs and careers' (Joynes et al., 2019, p. 8). Its importance requires an academic investment in articulate, comprehensive and informed resources to aid individuals when engaging in this purposeful activity. The discussion above provides an introductory 'go-to' for those who seek answers to important questions such as what is self-reflection, why is it important, and how can it be practically undertaken. The limitations of this discussion are fully recognised; a second thoughtpiece demands further key questions to be asked of self-reflection, namely *who* can self-reflect, and *where* and *when* self-reflection can take place (Jasper, 2011). It is only by asking these

questions, and many others, that a deep understanding of self-reflection can be acquired and the benefits of self-reflection to improve the potential for behavioural change can be reaped (Smith & Yates, 2012).

## Notes

1. Key questions, such as *What is 'self-reflection'?, Why is self-reflection important?*, and *How can self-reflection be practically undertaken?* were used to narrow my exploration of the available literature, these questions being of particular interest to me from a theoretical and practice-based perspective. Specific terms such as *definitions, value* and *practical strategies* were used to search different databases for relevant literature that was published between 2000 and the present day. Whilst most of the information collected was of worth, some of it resulted in disjointed and, at times, confusing insights.
2. Self-reflection is recognised as a *Personal skill* under the sub-category *Self-development and autonomy* (see Chalkiadaki, 2018).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributor

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